

Inside the Sandinista Regime: A Special Investigator's Perspective

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Summary



Alvaro Jose Baldizon Aviles, formerly Chief Investigator of the Special Investigations Commission of the Nicaraguan Ministry of the Interior, has provided a wealth of information about the Sandinistas' deliberate attempts to hide the truth about their human rights record. The Special Investigations Commission was created by the Nicaraguan Government in late 1982 to conduct internal investigations of reported governmental abuses about which the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and others had made inquiries. In his debriefings by U.S. Government officials, and during discussions with members of Congress and human rights groups, Mr. Baldizon described:

- The Nicaraguan Government's policy of human rights abuses and cover-ups, linking such figures as Interior Minister Tomas Borge and Vice Minister Luis Carrion with the executions of political opponents of the Sandinista regime; how the Nicaraguan Government regularly uses murder and torture to control the internal opposition and to confront the armed opposition.
- Methods used by the Nicaraguan Government to deceive visiting international delegations as to the real objectives of the Sandinista regime.
- The involvement of Interior Minister Tomas Borge and others with international drug trafficking.
- The Nicaraguan Government's employment of criminals in the police.
- The more than 200 Cuban advisers in the Interior Ministry involved in the day-to-day operation of the Ministry.
- The Nicaraguan Government's training of foreign guerrillas.
- The Government of Nicaragua's use of the *turbas divinas* as shock troops to neutralize opposition gatherings.
- Nicaraguan Government attempts to intimidate the Catholic Church and other religious groups.

Introduction

In the late 1970s, Marxist-Leninists took power in two Caribbean countries, Grenada and Nicaragua. The 17½ tons of documents found in the Grenadian Government archives after the landing of the joint East Caribbean-United States forces in October 1983 revealed the glaring difference between the moderate facade the Maurice Bishop government sought to present to the world and the grim reality of what the committed Marxist-Leninists in that government were actually saying and doing. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas have been less discreet in public about their commitment to “revolutionary internationalism” and their strong ties to the Soviets and Cubans. But they have successfully hidden from the outside world many of the harsh realities of their internal repression. Nicaraguans who continue to live in Nicaragua cannot speak out while they travel abroad without risk of being jailed upon their return. A few former Sandinista officials whose consciences demanded they speak out have been forced to seek asylum outside Nicaragua. One of these Nicaraguans is Alvaro Jose Baldizon Aviles, a former special investigator in the Ministry of the Interior headed by Tomas Borge Martinez. This paper contains information that Baldizon provided during September and October 1985 in interviews with representatives of human rights groups, the press, members of Congress, and representatives of the U.S. Government.

The information Baldizon has provided confirms reports by other sources of widespread human rights abuses committed by the Sandinistas. Reports from other Nicaraguan defectors such as Mateo Guerrero, Executive Director of the Sandinista-sponsored National Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (CNPPDH); and Bayardo Jesus Payan Hidalgo, ex-CNPPDH finance officer, have shown how the Sandinista government has attempted to hide its involvement in human rights abuses and to mislead international public opinion as to the true nature of life in post-revolutionary Nicaragua. Baldizon's story is unique in that he has inside information on many specific cases, thanks to his highly sensitive position in the Interior Ministry.

Baldizon's Personal History

On July 1, 1985, Lieutenant Alvaro Jose Baldizon Aviles of the Nicaraguan Interior Ministry crossed the Honduran border to escape from Nicaragua. Baldizon had been with the Interior Ministry for more than five years and a full member of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) for two years. Baldizon began working with the Sandinistas in early 1979, before the overthrow of Somoza, when he was 20 years old. At that time he was a truck driver and served as a clandestine courier for the Sandinistas. In 1983, he achieved the status of militant, or full member, in the FSLN. He joined the Sandinista Police in April 1980 and was later named Chief of Police at Station 15 in Ciudad Sandino, a suburb of Managua. Baldizon says that he first joined the Sandinista Police and the Interior Ministry because he had a "romantic belief" that the new Sandinista regime would be much better than the Somoza regime and that civil and human rights would be respected.

In September 1980 Baldizon was sent to Volgograd in the Soviet Union to attend a 10-month course in criminology. Upon his return to Nicaragua in July 1981, he began to work in the Interior Ministry's Department of Economic Investigation. He briefly worked for the Managua Reconstruction Board and in April 1982 he joined the Sandinista Police office for internal investigations.

In December 1982 Baldizon was named the chief investigator of the Interior Ministry's Special Investigations Commission. The commission was formed to investigate reports that the Government of Nicaragua (GON) had begun to receive from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) regarding abuses reportedly committed by government officials. In 1982 the IACHR began sending lists of missing Nicaraguans, with information alleging what the GON had done to them, to the Multi-Lateral Affairs office of the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry and requesting a reply to the charges. When replies were not received, the IACHR would send a second request noting that if no reply were received within a given time, the IACHR would assume that the charges against the GON were correct.

As the requests mounted, the Foreign Ministry decided to send them to the Ministry of the Interior (MINT) for reply, since MINT was the organization involved in the alleged actions. Baldizon has stated that Interior Minister Tomas Borge was worried that unless explanations and plausible cover stories were provided, the IACHR complaints would discredit the GON with the governments of countries that had supported it.

Borge therefore ordered the establishment of the Special Investigations Commission to look into the charges.

Baldizon says that the Special Investigations Commission soon concluded that 90 percent of the IACHR accusations were in fact correct. The Interior Ministry would use the reports from Baldizon's office to later concoct cover stories to explain away abuses committed by GON authorities. Baldizon personally investigated many of the cases and also reviewed the reports of other investigators. His work thus gave him unusual access to highly sensitive information regarding the GON's human rights abuses.

When Baldizon realized that his earlier romantic notions about the FSLN had been wrong, he decided that he had to leave the Interior Ministry. Baldizon believed that he had been used by the FSLN to cover up their misdeeds and that he had a moral obligation to expose them. He asked for release from his job in July 1984 but was told that since he possessed such sensitive information he would have to be sent to a military detention camp for at least a year before he could be released so that his information would lose much of its currency and sensitivity. Baldizon quickly withdrew his request, apparently convincing his superiors that he had only wanted to attend the university and that he was still committed to the Revolution. Nevertheless, believing that he was a marked man, and realizing that he might be murdered to ensure his silence, he made plans to flee the country. While in northern Nicaragua on an investigation, Baldizon waited until he was unobserved and then slipped across the border into Honduras. Baldizon had arranged for his brother to get his wife and son out of Nicaragua after his flight. His brother was unsuccessful. Baldizon's wife was arrested after it became known that he had fled. She was held for some weeks and then released and placed under house arrest. His brother was also arrested and is still being held for complicity in treason (charges deriving from Baldizon's defection).

The following examples Baldizon has provided show the nature and range of human rights abuses committed by the Sandinista government as well as its ties to international drug trafficking and the corruption within the GON.



Assassinations 1979-81

Some of the first cases Baldizon's office was called upon to investigate dealt with assassinations reported to have occurred soon after the Sandinistas took power in July 1979. For some time the Nicaraguan Government had received inquiries from various human rights organizations regarding these cases but had never given an official response explaining the events.

Silencing Opponents

Between July 1979 and March 1980, more than 80 opponents of the new Sandinista regime were captured and killed in the Granada area of Nicaragua under the personal authority of FSLN Comandante Reinerio Ordonez Padilla. When relatives of the missing persons complained to the military Judge Advocate's office in Managua, Ordonez was arrested and taken to Managua. He was never brought to trial, in spite of the extensive evidence against him, and was released 15 days later by order of Captain Montealegre. Montealegre, the Judge Advocate at the time, followed instructions from the National Directorate of the FSLN. The FSLN excused Ordonez's actions by saying that he was suffering from psychosis because of his outstanding military performance during the victories at Masaya and Jinotepe during the revolution. Inspectors in Baldizon's office reviewed the Judge Advocate's file on this case in 1983 and found that it contained more than 150 pages of solid evidence against Ordonez. Furthermore, Ordonez frequently talked about his actions in Granada and said that he had personally killed the people with his automatic rifle. The independent Permanent Commission for Human Rights also investigated this case and its report verifies much of what Baldizon has reported.

The Salazar Case

In 1980, officers of the General Directorate of State Security (DGSE) held a meeting to plan the murder of Jorge Salazar, a Nicaraguan businessman who was at that time the leader of the private sector group COSEP. Among those present were Comandante Guerrillero Juan Jose Ubeda; Captain Oscar Loza, Chief of Department F-1 (Operations) of the DGSE; Lieutenant Raul Castro Gonzales, chief of a section of Department F-1; and two members of the patrol and shock force of Department F-1. It was agreed that the DGSE personnel would ambush Salazar and then plant weapons in his vehicle to give the appearance that he had first fired on a DGSE patrol. The operation was carried out on November 17, 1980. The DGSE fired several shots to make it appear that there had been an exchange of fire, and then put several M-16s into Salazar's vehicle. The Sandinistas have publicly admitted killing Salazar, but claim that he had fired on security forces.

An Infiltrator's Escape Plan

In 1981, the DGSE, under orders from Borge, prepared a plan to assassinate a group of Nicaraguans who had taken asylum in the Guatemalan Embassy. The asylees were former Nicaraguan National Guard and Government personnel who had lived in the embassy since the Sandinista takeover in July 1979, and to whom the Nicaraguan Government had refused to issue safe-conduct papers so that they could leave the country. The DGSE planted a false asylee in the Guatemalan Embassy who said that friends of his, who visited him at the embassy, were in reality counter-revolutionaries preparing an escape plan for him. The false asylee invited the other asylees to join him, and some accepted.

The DGSE plant and the asylees he had tricked left the embassy by climbing a wall. They proceeded to a ranch in the foothills of the mountains near Managua where they were then captured and assassinated by members of Department F-1 under the command of Lieutenant Raul Castro Gonzales, chief of the department. Castro had planned the operation in conjunction with officers of Department F-2 which monitors diplomatic establishments and personnel.

False Clemency

In mid-1981, eight prisoners in the Zona Franca Penitentiary disarmed three prison guards and sparked an uprising in one of the prison buildings. After gunfire was exchanged between the guards and the prisoners for several hours, Borge talked the prisoners into giving up their weapons and surrendering by promising them their lives would not be endangered. As soon as the prisoners

were back in their cells, Borge ordered the execution of the eight who started the riot. Lieutenant Raul Castro Gonzales of the DGSE took the eight men behind one of the prison blocks and machine gunned them while Borge and Humberto Ortega Saavedra, the Minister of Defense, looked on. Later, the Ministry of the Interior published an official communique in which it reported that the prisoners had been killed while fighting during the riot.

The incident described above illustrates a common practice of the Sandinistas in which they arrest a number of people, then, after interrogation, frequently involving torture, separate those among the detainees who have the most potential to be leaders and kill them. The remainder, knowing nothing of the fate of the murdered group, are sent to prison. If the Sandinistas later receive inquiries from the IACHR about the persons who have disappeared, the government locates those in prison to show that they are still alive. Government officials deny that those captured were killed, or they allege that they were either killed in combat or joined the contras.

Action against Miskitos

In December 1981 the Sandinista Popular Army (EPS) and DGSE forces in Leimus, northern Zelaya, launched an operation against the MISURA Indian organization. From a Sumo Indian prisoner they learned of plans to disarm government guards at the resin processing plant in La Tronquera and along the border. The Sumo also gave the names of 60 people involved in "counter-revolutionary" activities. The authorities stopped a launch on the Rio Coco which contained 25 people named by the Sumo and took them prisoner. Later, in an action in San Carlos, Rio Coco, two government officials were killed. When the Sandinista authorities in Leimus heard this, nine previously captured prisoners were taken out and killed. On December 23, 1981, two prisoners escaped and Gustavo Martinez, Commander of the frontier area, ordered the execution of seven more prisoners. Second Lieutenant Chester Enrique Dicarío, the DGSE counter-intelligence chief in the area, participated in the assassination along with soldiers from EPS Battalion 90-15. The two escapees were caught and killed, and a day or two later six more prisoners were killed by a squad from the 90-15 Battalion, commanded by Second Lieutenant Juan Soza. Eventually the authorities assassinated a total of 30 prisoners.

Lieutenants Soza and Dicarío and five soldiers were tried by military tribunals, found guilty of murder, and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. They were shortly freed, however, by order of Comandante Joaquin Cuadra Lacayo, Chief of Staff of the EPS.

Steadman Fagoth, the leader of MISURA at that time, denounced this incident to the Inter-American

Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which in turn made inquiries of the Nicaraguan Government, and included a list of names of those who were killed. By error, the list included two Miskitos, Asel Mercado and Luis Fajardo, who were alive. The government presented Mercado to a delegation from the IACHR to support its argument that the MISURA complaint was unjustified and simply a propaganda maneuver to denigrate the Nicaraguan Government. Baldizon's office reviewed the case in 1984 and found that the MISURA complaint was correct, except for the two names incorrectly included, and obtained a statement from Dicarío substantiating the charges.



Nicaraguan Indians at a Honduran refugee center.

“Special Measures”— Government Assassinations of FSLN Opponents

Immediately after the 1979 takeover and through late 1981, assassinations of political opponents of the Sandinista regime had been carried out in a mostly ad hoc manner as shown in the previous cases. In late 1981, Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge signed a secret order that standardized the application of “special measures,” i.e., the illegal execution of political enemies of the Sandinista regime and habitual criminals. There is only one copy of this document, which is classified as a “state secret” and is entitled “The Standardization of the Application of Special Measures against Elements of the Enemy Potential and Criminal Potential throughout the National Territory.” Baldizon reports that this order states that the application of “special measures” may be effected only with the approval of Borge and the First Vice Minister of the Interior, Luis Carrion. Baldizon says that the document ordered that the phrase “special measures” be used in all references to assassinations and that only a select group of long-time Sandinista militants would be involved in the executions. He says that only chiefs of general directorates and MINT regional delegates could request the application of special measures and that they be applied only to people whose detention was not public knowledge.

Following are examples of “special measures” carried out by Ministry of the Interior forces after the issuing of the order, as well as other reports Baldizon investigated of assassinations and other human rights abuses in the government’s frequent denial of due process of law.

- In early June 1982, the DGSE office at the Rosita Mine in northern Zelaya, under the command of Captain Evaristo Vasquez, received information on the possible appearance of “counter-revolutionary” groups in the Musawas-Espanolina-Salto Grande area. On July 19, 1982, a vehicle belonging to the Ministry of the Interior was ambushed by anti-Sandinista forces at the Salto Grande bridge. Two DGSE officials were killed and one was wounded. The Sandinista People’s Army (EPS) and the MINT launched combined operations in the area, which included repressive occupation of the towns; massive arrests of Miskitos, many of whom were taken to the DGSE operations prisons in Rosita and Puerto Cabezas; assassination of male prisoners; and the raping of women. On July 19, 1982, combined forces

under the command of MINT Captain Alvaro Herrera and EPS Lieutenant Erwing Caldera entered the town of Musawas. After taking the town they reportedly assassinated seven prisoners and raped five women.

The Nicaraguan Government repeatedly received queries and complaints about this affair since it had been given considerable publicity in Europe. In May 1984 Baldizon’s office was ordered to investigate. The investigator reviewed a copy of a report from Captain Herrera to Jose Gonzales, the MINT delegate in northern Zelaya, in which Herrera said he had ordered the execution of seven prisoners. The investigator also spoke to other personnel who had been at Musawas and who confirmed the report. Since many of the towns in the area were deserted because of government relocation policies for the Miskitos, the investigator could not find any former residents to talk to. Since those officers questioned would not admit to rape, the second complaint could not be proved.

No action was taken when the report was submitted. Furthermore, the complaints had named nine persons as having been killed. The government again found two of them, who had not been at Musawas, and produced their photographs to show that they were alive. The GON used this to cover the murders of the others by saying that they, too, must have left the area.

- In early July 1982, the MISURA Indian organization launched a military offensive throughout northern Zelaya, with its greatest activity centered in the area around Seven-Bank, where the EPS sustained 25 killed and many wounded. The EPS and the DGSE countered this with military and repressive civil actions in the Miskito Indian communities in the Seven-Bank and Puerto Cabezas areas. During the military actions, large numbers of Miskitos fled from their towns and many of them were captured and then killed by the army; others were interrogated first and then shot. In Kligna Landing,

The Ministers of Defense and of the Interior formed a special commission to determine the fate of Miskito prisoners. The Interior Ministry’s own investigators concluded the commission was responsible for imprisoning 400 Miskitos and executing 250 others.

for example, 12 Indians who had taken refuge in the mountains were captured by the army and turned over to the operations section of the DGSE in Puerto Cabezas where they were interrogated and tortured by Second Lieutenant Lobo, and later killed. Of those who stayed in their town, hundreds were taken prisoner.

In December 1982 various foreign governments and international organizations, including the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, repeatedly questioned the Nicaraguan Government about the fate of hundreds of missing Indians. The government was pressured to the point that Tomas Borge ordered Baldizon's office to investigate the situation.

The investigators found evidence that the EPS and the DGSE had killed many Indians after they were captured and had taken hundreds of other prisoners in the towns and removed them from their homes. The investigators also found that the Ministers of the Interior and Defense had established a special commission to determine the fate of the Miskito prisoners. The commission's work was coordinated by Comandante Julio Ramos, Chief of Intelligence of the EPS. The other members were EPS Comandante Omar Hallesleven; EPS Sub-Comandante Masis; Sub-Comandante Jose Gonzales, the senior MINT representative in Puerto Cabezas; and MINT Captain Alvaro Herrera. The investigation revealed that the commission ordered the release of 70 prisoners, the transfer of 200 to the penal system for imprisonment, and the execution of more than 100. The investigators also found a copy of an October 1982 report from Sub-Comandante Gonzales to Vice Minister Luis Carrion in which Gonzales reported that 40 Miskitos had been killed in combat, 200 imprisoned, and 150 executed by the EPS and DGSE as a result of the commission's decisions. The Miskitos were executed near the Wawa River by troops led by EPS Captain Santana. Lieutenant Jose Dolores Reyes, Second Lieutenant Lobo, and MINT officers Chester Enrique Dicario and Jimmy Wopel also participated. The investigation report was submitted to Interior Minister Borge June 27, 1983, but he took no further action.

- In September 1982 the Sandinista Army (EPS) engaged in military operations in the Prinzapolka, Northern Zelaya area to counter an uprising of the Misura Indian organization. The EPS captured Jonathon Cristobal Willies and three other Miskito Indians who were members of MISURA as they were traveling on the Prinzapolka River in a canoe. The EPS confiscated four Chinese AK-47 rifles and took the four prisoners to Sub-Comandante Santana, EPS Chief of Operations in the area, who then ordered their execution.

As a result of repeated demands for information on the whereabouts of Willies from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the non-governmental Nicaraguan Permanent Commission on Human Rights, Baldizon's office assigned Raul Castro Gonzales to investigate the case. Castro found a report from Santana to Captain Alvaro Herrera, the chief of the Puerto Cabezas office of the DGSE, in which Santana referred to the execution of Willies and three other unnamed Miski-

tos. Castro also took a declaration confirming this from William Gonzales, the DGSE counter-intelligence officer for the Prinzapolka area who was with Santana at the time, and found a file in the headquarters of Special Region I that listed Willies as having been killed by the EPS on September 11, 1982. Despite the report the ministry took no action against Santana.

- In early December 1982, officers of the Directorate General of State Security (DGSE) arrested Ramon Heberto Torrentes Molina, a 20-year-old youth, in Chinandega and imprisoned him there in police cells under the jurisdiction of First Lieutenant Donald Escampini. He was arrested because of allegations that he was involved with recruiting for the armed opposition; had served as a courier; and was an active opponent of the regime. Later, Comandante Guerrillero David Blanco Nunez, the MINT Delegate for Region II, asked Vice Minister Luis Carrion for permission to apply "special measures" (i.e., execution) to Torrentes. Carrion approved the request and Lieutenants Banegas, DGSE operations chief in Region II, and Jose Maria Benavides, DGSE counter-intelligence chief in Chinandega, carried out the sentence in a dry stream bed off the highway between Chinandega and Leon.

On January 2, 1983, after receiving a complaint from the IACHR, Tomas Borge ordered Baldizon's office to investigate Torrentes' death. When Baldizon submitted his report, Borge said that he had ordered the investigation because he forgot that Carrion had approved the use of special measures. The Ministry's official explanation was that Torrentes had been killed "while attempting to escape."

- In late 1983, a "counter-revolutionary" guerrilla force ambushed a MINT special forces patrol in Jalapa in the northern department of Nueva Segovia, killing four of its members. Borge ordered the MINT's special forces to take strong reprisal measures against the peasants in the area. Twelve people were killed as a result of those actions, including an evangelical minister named Alvarenga, in Las Uvas, Jalapa. The MINT forces arrested approximately 50 peasants and took them to the headquarters of the General Directorate of State Security (DGSE) in Esteli. Ten of the prisoners were separated from the others and later taken to the special forces base on the Chiltepe peninsula near Managua where they were executed by order of Borge and secretly buried. The rest of the prisoners were later released in Esteli and Jalapa where Borge told the public that the missing 10 (who had been executed) had been killed in combat. Substantiating evidence was obtained from Sub-Comandante Mayorga, MINT chief of staff in Region I; Comandante Cristian Pichardo, MINT delegate for Region I; and from DGSE Lieutenant Herrera, chief of the DGSE operations department in the region.

• In February 1983 Paster Cruz Herrera, a Nicaraguan farmer, was arrested by DGSE forces near the town of the Pantasma, Jinotega. He was held for three days in Jinotega by order of First Lieutenant Mario Noguera, the DGSE counterintelligence commander there, then transferred to the DGSE Operations Department prison for Region IV in Las Tejas, Matagalpa, and put at the disposal of First Lieutenant Vallecillo, the commander of the prison. After being interrogated and tortured, Cruz was returned to a cell occupied by

“Special measures” were sometimes applied when evidence was circumstantial or insufficient to make a case against a person.

two other farmers from the Pantasma region who knew him. Those two were later released, but Cruz was executed along with three other prisoners in April 1983. The execution was ordered by Sub-Comandante Javier Lopez Lowerli, the MINT Delegate in Region VI, and had the approval of Vice Minister Luis Carrion. Lopez sought approval because he did not have a legal case against Cruz and wanted to apply “special measures.” In November 1983 Baldizon investigated this case because of requests for information from various human rights groups. The results of his investigation were submitted to the Minister of the Interior in December 1983, but no further action was taken.

• During 1983 the EPS and DGSE forces carried out a campaign to counter the effects of anti-government guerrilla activities in the departments of Jinotega and Matagalpa. More than 300 farmers suspected of having collaborated with the counter-revolutionaries were executed by DGSE personnel in the Cua, Pantasma, Waslala, and Rio Blanco areas. Many family members of the farmers who had been killed reported their family members as having “disappeared” to the non-governmental Permanent Commission on Human Rights (CPDH) and to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States which published lists of the names of the people who were missing from the region.

Residents of the two departments continued to complain and manifest their discontent to the government. This, combined with pressure from the CPDH and the IACHR, caused Borge to order an investigation by Baldizon’s office. The investigators reported in June 1984 that more than 300 farmers had been executed and that in 80 percent of the cases the execution was proposed by Sub-Comandante Javier Lopez Lowerli, the MINT Delegate in Region VI, who asked for and received permission to apply “special measures” from Vice Minister Luis Carrion. The investigators also found that Coman-

dante Guerrillero Alonzo Porras, the Political Chief of the FSLN in the Region; Javier Carrion, the EPS Commander in Matagalpa; and Wilfredo Barreto, the government delegate in Region VI, were also involved in the executions.

Borge ordered the creation of a special prosecutor’s office for Region VI to take legal action to satisfy the complaints. The office, however, only brought charges against EPS Second Lieutenant Rodriguez and three DGSE officers. The three regional chiefs principally responsible for the executions—Lopez, Porras, and Barreto—were merely transferred to other regions. The four charged officers were freed shortly thereafter, and Rodriguez, even though he had received a prison sentence, was sent to study in Bulgaria. The Nicaraguan Government continued to take action to maintain control over the region and forced hundreds of rural families to abandon their homes, cattle, and cultivated lands in the mountains of Jinotega and move to designated resettlement areas. Although the people in the affected area knew about the assassinations, the killings did not become public knowledge in the rest of Nicaragua because the government censored any publications that might have reported on the slaughter.

• On July 19, 1983, DGSE officers Guillermo Lugo Marengo and Moises Rivera and First Lieutenant Victor Romero, Chief of the Regional Special Troops in the area, met in a bar on the outskirts of San Miguelito, Rio San Juan, and planned the capture of Guillermo Lorio and his wife, Jamilett Sequeira. The three officers had received information that Lorio and Sequeira were the principal authors of “counter-revolutionary” campaigns in San Miguelito because they were the coordinators of a religious movement called “Delegates of the Word.”

Baldizon received orders on July 25 to investigate the deaths of Lorio, Sequeira, and Juan Luz. Their hastily buried bodies had been found by *campesinos* who reported this to the authorities in San Miguelito. The investigation had been requested by Sub-Comandante Saul Alvarez, the MINT representative in the region. Baldizon learned that the three MINT officers and a soldier from Lieutenant Romero’s command went to the Lorio house at 3 a.m. on July 20, 1983, took the couple prisoner, and began to ransack the house. In the process they disturbed the Lorios’ three children who screamed so loudly they woke up the next-door neighbor, Luz, who left his house to see what was wrong. The MINT officers picked up Luz, since they did not want a witness, threw him and the Lorios into the back of a Construction Ministry truck they had requisitioned, and took them to an area called Los Pantanos, about 5 kilometers from San Miguelito. The three officers each tortured and interrogated one prisoner in different parts of the Los

Pantanos area. Romero, after torturing Lorio, cut his throat with a bayonet. Rivera did the same to Luz, and Lugo cut Sequeira's throat.

The three officers then left but returned at 7 a.m. to bury the three bodies with tools they obtained from a construction company. When they found Sequeira still alive, on her knees with a crucifix in her hand, trying to pray, Lugo killed her with three shots. They buried the three bodies. During his investigation Baldizon personally dug up the remains of the three. This case has also

The hastily buried bodies of Guillermo Lorio, Jamilett Sequeira, and Juan Luz were found by campesinos near San Miguelito. Because of their activity in a religious movement, Lorio and Sequeira were considered counter-revolutionaries. Luz was an unfortunate witness to their apprehension.

been described by Humberto Belli, former editorial page writer of *La Prensa*, the remaining independent newspaper in Nicaragua, in testimony before the Congressional Task Force on Central America. During his testimony Belli presented a letter signed by the President of the Nicaraguan Council of Bishops, Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega, which listed the names of lay Christian leaders who had been killed by the Sandinistas. According to Bishop Vega's letter, the officers had tried to recruit Sequeira as an agent of state security. She refused and several days later, she, her husband, and another man (Luz) were found dead in the San Miguelito area.

- On March 6, 1984, a company of the Sandinista army, under the command of Second Lieutenant Rios Torres, occupied La Pan, a Miskito Indian community in Northern Zelaya. The troops locked all the men in the church while the women were left outside. The EPS remained in the town for about a month. During that time, the male citizens were kept locked up, some of the women were manhandled and raped, the houses were sacked, and most of the community's cattle were slaughtered.

Second Lieutenants Marvin Vallejo, of the Operations Department of the DGSE, and Manuel Salazar, a DGSE counter-intelligence officer, visited La Pan while the EPS was there and reported the circumstances. Second Lieutenant Carlos Espinosa of Baldizon's office was sent to investigate the situation. He found that although Rios Torres, who had personally participated in these acts, and other officers had been arrested as a result of the reports, they had been released by order of Coman-

dante Joaquin Cuadra Lacayo, the Chief of Staff of the EPS. They were never punished, and no further action was taken.

- At the end of 1984, residents of some of the mountain communities of Jinotega and Matagalpa departments reported the existence of clandestine cemeteries to the special prosecutor's office. Investigators sent to the area found these cemeteries in La Sompopera, municipality of El Cua; in the neighborhood of Pantasma; and at a place called Cascajera in the municipality of Rancho Grande. The investigators believed these cemeteries were used to bury some of the victims of "special measures."

- During testimony of October 9, 1985, to the House Subcommittee on Human Rights, Baldizon was asked about human rights abuses reportedly committed by the armed Nicaraguan opposition, or the "contras." He said that from what he had seen during his work the contras did not have a policy of committing abuses while the Sandinistas did. He said that when contra abuses occurred they appeared to be motivated by revenge. He said that in some instances civilians who were accompanying military convoys were caught in an ambush and reported as abuses. He estimated that for every contra abuse there were 10 committed by the government.

Deceiving Visiting International Delegations

As part of its international political strategy, the Sandinista government seeks to use foreign visitors and religious groups as instruments of support for its public posture that the FSLN and the Nicaraguan Government respect religion and human rights. Baldizon said that the GON carefully orchestrates such visits whenever possible in order to obtain the greatest propaganda value. Many of the visiting delegations are organized by Nicaraguan solidarity groups in the United States and Western Europe. These group tours of Nicaragua are often prepared in conjunction with Sandinista organizations to show only what the Sandinistas want to be seen. In many cases the members of such groups are told by the organizers that they have an obligation when they return to their countries to speak out on the "Nicaraguan reality" that they have experienced. In truth what they have experienced and seen is merely a carefully prepared facade which masks the real situation in Nicaragua.

Baldizon explained that when the Nicaraguan Government learns that a foreign delegation wants to visit certain areas in the country, MINT officials are sent out to prepare the way. People who appear on MINT's list of "potential enemies" receive visits by the officials and are told to stay away from the visiting delegation. Some "potential enemies" are locked up during the visit as a warning to others of what could happen to them if they do not cooperate.

Security agents pretending to be photographers, journalists, or relatives of people in the region to be visited frequently join the delegations to accompany them on their trips. In this way the MINT can monitor the attitudes of the groups' members, and subtly steer them to particular places or people. They report to the Ministry on the groups' travel itinerary. Using advance notice of the groups' travel plans, Borge sends teams of people to be on the routes used and in the localities to be visited. These are called "casual encounter" teams and when a delegation arrives at a location, MINT personnel, pretending to be local residents, "just happen" to be available to talk with the delegation's members. They describe alleged contra atrocities and the benefits of the Sandinista revolution for Nicaragua's peasants and workers.

During a meeting on October 3, 1985, with representatives of religious and human rights groups, Baldizon was asked for some examples of this type of

operation. He cited a trip in 1983 by members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to Nicaragua's Atlantic coast to investigate reported human rights abuses of the Nicaraguan Indian population. Lieutenant Raul Castro from Baldizon's office accompanied the group posing as the nephew of Leonte Herdocia, the president of the FSLN-sponsored National Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights. In another incident, in October 1984, the Nicaraguan Indian leader Brooklyn Rivera returned to Nicaragua to discuss with the government the possibility of autonomy for the Atlantic coast region. Rivera's group included a representative of Senator Edward Kennedy's staff as well as several other U.S. citizens. A lieutenant from the Puerto Cabezas office of State Security accompanied Rivera's group, posing as a photographer from the FSLN official newspaper *Barricada*. During the same meeting Baldizon added that the MINT also maintains dossiers on journalists who cover Nicaragua. These files contain whatever biographic material is available on the reporters, copies of articles they have written about Nicaragua, and lists of personal habits and vices.

Useful Fools

Baldizon says that within the FSLN, Interior Minister Tomas Borge has taken on the responsibility for exploiting religion for propaganda purposes. Borge, a hard-line Marxist, has been studying the Bible because, as he explained to Baldizon and other party members, "There is no more effective way to combat the enemy than with his own weapons."

Baldizon reports that Borge prepares himself for visits from foreign Christian religious organizations or speeches to these groups by studying the Bible and extracting appropriate passages for use in his conversations or addresses. When the foreign visitors have departed he scoffs at them in front of his subordinates in the Interior Ministry, bragging about his ability to manipulate and exploit the "deluded" religious group. Baldizon says that Borge refers to the visiting religious and human rights groups as "temporary allies" and *tontos utiles* (useful fools).

In internal FSLN circles Borge insists he cannot confide in religious persons because they are misguided idealists who have a reactionary nature. Such persons can only be temporary tactical allies of the Revolution. For this reason, Borge said, one must exercise great care with FSLN members who show signs of this type of idealism because such persons are ideologically weak and might one day betray the Revolution.

To impress foreign religious groups that visit Nicaragua, Borge has decorated his Ministry of the Interior office with large pictures of poor children and

prominently displayed religious objects such as crucifixes, tapestries with religious motifs, a large wooden statue of Christ carved by local artisans, and a Bible. Borge has another office, his favorite, in the Reparto Bello Horizonte where he conducts most ministerial business and where he also lives. This office contains pictures of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Augusto Cesar Sandino, and Carlos Fonseca and there are no religious objects to be seen. Copies of the *Communist Manifesto*, *Das Kapital*, *The State and the Law*, and various volumes of Marxist/Leninist philosophy are in evidence. Borge uses this office to receive delegations from Socialist countries and for official ministerial functions.

In late May 1985, all personnel from the principal MINT offices were instructed to come to work in civilian clothes the following day and to assemble at the Silvio Mayorga Building (MINT headquarters). There they were told that they were to participate in the closing ceremony of an International Young Baptist Convention of the Baptist Church in Managua, pretending to be Nicaraguan Evangelicals. The ceremony was to be presided over by Borge. At about 6:30 p.m. the ceremony began and, as planned, some 70 percent of those present were military or Ministry of the Interior personnel dressed in civilian clothes. In addition to some 600 military/Interior Ministry personnel, there were delegations from the United States, Puerto Rico, and several Latin American countries. The affair was covered by Sandinista television for showing only outside Nicaragua since the local citizenry would have recognized the many MINT employees among the alleged Nicaraguan Baptists.

King for a Day

In January 1985, Tomas Borge ordered Baldizon's office to seek out and provide him with names of persons in dire economic straits or with serious health problems who would then be used in staged "shows" before visiting foreign political or religious groups. A quota of six such persons was to be furnished every 15 days.

Minister Borge arranged his reception of these unfortunate or needy persons to coincide with the arrival in his office of a foreign delegation or group and ensured that the ministry TV film crew was on hand to record the apparently spontaneous event. As the foreign delegation was ushered in, Borge would be seen engaged in earnest conversation with one of the needy or handicapped persons, promising help that Baldizon says was rarely delivered. Borge would apologize in sanctimonious fashion to the delegation for the delay in his meeting with them and would make much of the burdens placed on him as a result of his responsibilities and dedication to the downtrodden.

In May 1985, such a show was staged for the benefit of a visiting delegation of the West German

Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU). In this show, a blind man who had earlier requested an accordion so he could entertain to earn his living was presented with an instrument. He thereupon entertained the German guests with several numbers. During the planning of this show by the Ministry, it was learned that a new accordion could cost over 100,000 cordobas. The MINT decided to buy a slightly used instrument for 75,000 cordobas and the seller was given a 15,000 cordoba downpayment. The instrument was repossessed from the blind man after his show appearance and returned to the seller.

In another case, Borge was given an old man who had been severely crippled some months earlier when struck by a hit-and-run driver who, as it later transpired, was a drunken Cuban adviser. The Sandinista Police covered up for the Cuban and placed the blame for the accident on the old man. The man had, up to this point, received no aid beyond medical attention from Nicaraguan or Cuban authorities and was reduced to begging in order to survive. He and his wife were given food by the nearby Catholic Church. In his staged interview with the invalid in the hearing of a visiting group, Borge emphasized that the man had not been aided by Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo but rather by himself, the Minister of the Interior. After the ceremony Borge criticized the office for having furnished a person with a background such as the old man's because the fact that a drunken Cuban adviser was responsible for the man's accident might have surfaced in the presence of a foreign delegation and could have caused an awkward situation for Borge and the Ministry.



Wide World Photos

Interior Minister Tomas Borge.

Ties to Drug Trafficking

Baldizon's office received a report in mid-1984 linking Interior Minister Borge with cocaine trafficking. During a party at his house, Jorge Avequeira, a Chilean living in Nicaragua, heard from David Miranda, another Chilean and a Second Lieutenant in the Nicaraguan police, that Tomas Borge was involved in smuggling cocaine from Colombia to the United States via Nicaragua. Borge's office instructed Baldizon to investigate this as a compromise of a state secret. Baldizon thought this was a mistake, since he could not believe that the government would be involved in narcotics trafficking, so he asked the chief of his office, Captain Charlotte Baltodano Egner, if it should not be investigated as a slander against the Minister. Baltodano was taken aback and said that the office should not have received the report since the fact that Borge had involved the government in narcotics trafficking was known in the Ministry only to Borge, his assistant, the chiefs of police and state security, and to herself. Outside the Ministry it was known only to members of the FSLN's National Directorate. Baltodano reported the exchange she had with Baldizon to Borge who then ordered that Baldizon be given an official explanation of why the Ministry was involved in trafficking.

Baltodano told Baldizon that Borge had made contact with the Colombian cocaine dealers through Captain Paul Atha, the director of "H and M Investments," a MINT dependency controlled by Borge, which handles business activities in Nicaragua and abroad in order to obtain U.S. dollars. Baltodano told him that the GON supplies the cocaine traffickers with Aero Commander and Navajo planes and access to the Montelimar Airport as a refueling stop between Colombia and the United States. She said that the Ministry had become involved in drug trafficking in order to obtain money for mounting clandestine operations by the Intelligence and State Security Department outside of Nicaragua.

The office later received an order from the office of the Minister countermanding the instruction to investigate the leak of information, and a few days later Captain Franco Montealegre, Borge's personal assistant, went to Baldizon and said that if he received any further information about cocaine trafficking in the future, it should be passed to the Minister without investigation.

Several months later Baldizon saw a small plane being fired at by the anti-aircraft emplacements around Diriamba, Carazo. Baldizon then went to Borge's office to wait to report the results of the case he had been in-

vestigating. Borge, who was in a meeting in his office with MINT Department Chiefs, left immediately for the airport. Baltodano, who accompanied Borge, later told Baldizon that Borge had ordered everyone away from the plane, which had landed at Los Brasiles Airport, and put it under custody until he arrived and personally removed several bags of cocaine.

Baldizon says that in 1982 a MINT directive was issued which stated that all cocaine, precious metals, and U.S. dollars recovered during MINT operations must be sent to Tomas Borge's office. The proceeds from the sale of these objects were to be used to help finance MINT's international activities. Baldizon says that as a result of this order, there are no longer any trials for possession of cocaine since there is no longer any evidence to present.

Use of Criminals

Baldizon reports that upon the victory of Sandinista forces in July 1979, the FSLN established the Sandinista Police and incorporated into its ranks numerous former criminals because they had fought with the Sandinistas against the government of Anastasio Somoza. Many were appointed to positions in the Department of Criminal Investigations (DIC) because it was assumed they knew the criminal field better than anyone else. As a result, key positions in the Department are currently occupied by persons who were formerly engaged in the very crimes they are now called on to investigate. Baldizon mentions as examples a former armed robber who works in the robbery section of the DIC and the many drug users and traffickers who are now DIC operations officers.

The presence of this criminal element in the police has had the following effects:

- Part of the marijuana and other drugs confiscated by these criminals is sold again to enrich them and part is consumed by them.
- Some of the drugs confiscated by the police are sent to the General Directorate of State Security (DGSE) where they are consumed by some of the chiefs or used in operational activities, including being planted on innocent persons whom the DGSE intends to compromise. Confiscated cocaine is sent directly to Borge's office which uses it for commercial purposes.
- The networks of secret police informants have a dual function: They inform the police about individuals who use or deal in drugs and they resell drugs confiscated by the police. Thus, they have a significant influence on the local drug market, in some cases controlling and managing it in an almost monopolistic fashion.
- Most of the chiefs of police units have their homes furnished with stolen objects, in contrast to the chiefs of other Ministry of the Interior offices, who furnish their homes with items confiscated by the Sandinista government.

Department F-6 (Specialized Techniques) of the Nicaraguan State Security (DGSE) has as its mission the furnishing of technical support for operational activity carried out by other departments of the directorate. Much of its activity consists of surveillance of movements and activities of persons suspected of opposition to the Sandinista regime. To carry out its mission,

Department F-6 makes extensive use of a group of common criminals recruited because of their special technical skills. These include armed robbery, burglary, safecracking, auto theft, and the neutralization of watchdogs. Many of the criminals were recruited while in prison.

The criminal group within Department F-6 is used mainly for:

- Stealing cars, especially taxis, to be used by the DGSE in operations such as the clandestine and forcible detention of suspects. After their operational use, these vehicles are usually painted a different color and are incorporated into the directorate's motor pool or are sometimes cannibalized for parts.
- Nocturnal clandestine incursions to homes of opponents of the Sandinista regime to plant "evidence" of anti-government activity such as arms, drugs, explosives, etc., or to obtain documents, valuables, etc.
- Clandestine entries into homes of opponents of the regime to install microphones and/or still or movie cameras.

These criminals are also permitted to operate on their own in their chosen trade with DGSE protection and, if arrested by the police, they are promptly released on the orders of DGSE Chief Lenin Cerna.

Since the second half of 1982, Captain Raul Cordon Morince, the head of the National Penitentiary System (SNP) of the Ministry of the Interior, has sponsored and presided over widespread corruption and human rights abuses at all levels of the SNP. Cordon has compromised and now dominates the senior officers of the SNP and has thus created a group of persons who fear to speak out or act against his corrupt practices in the SNP. He pursues and entraps those officials who at first are not willing to participate in his illegal or immoral activities. Investigations into this state of affairs were conducted by Baldizon's office. The following specifics concerning Cordon were developed as a result of those investigations:

- Cordon keeps for himself the considerable funds earned from the agricultural labor or handicraft production of prisoners.
- He has appropriated for himself and his cronies almost all donations from international institutions which he receives in the name of the SNP. Among such were gifts from OXFAM of Mexico which gave thousands of dollars on several occasions. He rents out large numbers of prisoners to private farmers or to the National Institute of Agrarian Reform to harvest coffee, cotton, and sugarcane and keeps for himself the bulk of the proceeds paid to him for the use of these prisoners. In 1983 or

1984, a foreign nun who works with the Nicaraguan National Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (CNPPDH) gave Cordon a number of television sets and video cassette recorders which she had obtained in Europe for inmates of the SPN. The sets were turned over to Cordon during a special ceremony. When the nun departed, Cordon summoned his subordinates and distributed the items among them, keeping a TV and VCR for himself. Not one item reached the prisoners.

- He appropriates for his own use or resale the cigarettes and toothpaste contained in individual packages sent to prisoners by the Red Cross. He extracts sexual favors from wives of former National Guard personnel who are incarcerated in the SNP system by offering in exchange visits to the prisoners or their transfer to a less strict facility.

In addition to his own transgressions, Cordon overlooks, condones, and/or covers up misdeeds of his subordinates, thus binding them to him in an enforced loyalty. Some examples of these activities are as follows:

- He allows the chiefs of prisons to mistreat and torture prisoners. In the Zona Franca prison in Managua, recalcitrant prisoners are put into a small metal enclosure, formerly the enclosed body of a small, non-serviceable truck, which is then left exposed to the sun, resulting in severe dehydration of the occupants. The enclosure is referred to by the prisoners as "El Chupis" (the sucker), the brand name of a popular sherbet.

- He allows his subordinates to build houses using state materials and prison labor.

- He allows his subordinates to obtain sexual favors from wives of prisoners by using blackmail or extortion.

The final report on Cordon's activities was never forwarded to the Minister and remains filed at Bal-dizon's old office because it was quashed by senior ministry officials beholden to Cordon. These same officials had also stopped interim reports on Cordon's actions.

The Cuban Presence in the Interior Ministry

Through mid-1985 when Baldizon left Nicaragua, the presence of Cuban advisers and instructors at many levels within the Nicaraguan Ministry of the Interior was pervasive. Baldizon reports that there are Cuban advisers assigned to the Minister and to each of his three vice ministers, one assigned to the chief of the central general staff, one to each of the three chiefs of general directorates, one to each of the 13 chiefs of directorates, and 43 at the level of chiefs of department. When developments of interest to the Cubans occur at the section level, they may insert advisers there as well.

The mission of these Cuban advisers is to:

- Furnish substantive advice to the senior ministry personnel.
- Implement in Nicaragua the security system and methods employed in Cuba.
- Increase the effectiveness of ministerial forces by supporting the ministry's leadership in the planning and execution of combat actions.
- Oversee and encourage the ideological development of ministry members along Cuban lines.
- Ensure close coordination between the Nicaraguan and Cuban security services.
- Prepare war plans and, in the event of hostilities, participate in the Sandinista defense effort.

The Cuban influence on decisionmaking in the Ministry is extensive and Cuban advice and observations are treated as though they were orders. The Nicaraguans assume that the Cubans also act as collectors of information on Nicaraguan matters for the Cuban mission in Nicaragua. Cuban instructors are assigned to the schools of the ministry as follows:

	Cuban Instructors
Walter Mendoza Police School	10
German Pomares Infantry School	10
Directorate of Special Operations	10
Franklin Garcia Counter-Intel School	6
Francisco Moreno Cadre School	5
Enciphered Communications School	5
Personal Security School	5
Communications School	2

Cuban advisers are also to be found in the regional offices of the ministry including:

- 1 adviser for each of the ministerial delegates of the six regions and three special zones;
- 1 adviser for each chief of internal order of the six regions;
- 2 advisers for each of the six chiefs of State Security of the six regions and Special Zones I and II (one is a specialist in counter-intelligence, the other in operations); and
- 1 instructor attached to the special troops in each of the Regions II, VI, and Special Zone I.

The ministry also has Cuban technicians assigned to it as follows:

- 20 auto mechanics for LADA, ZIL, and UAZ vehicles at the central automotive repair shop;
- 5 armorers at the Department of Armament of the Directorate General of Financial Services;
- 2 technicians in bank security alarm systems; and
- 2 dentists, 1 dental technician, 3 doctors, and 2 psychologists assigned to the ministry's medical department.

Baldizon also reports that advisers and technicians from other Communist countries are also present in the ministry as follows:

- 1 East German adviser in the Political Directorate;
- 1 North Korean adviser in the Directorate of Personnel;
- 1 Bulgarian adviser in the data processing section of the Department of Information and Analysis;
- 5 East German auto mechanics from the IFA plant in the central automotive repair shop;
- 2 Bulgarian fork-lift mechanics from the Balkan car plant at the central automotive repair shop;
- 2 Soviet mechanics for LADA, ZIL, and URAL vehicles at the central automotive repair shop;
- 2 Bulgarian telephone technicians in communications; and
- 1 East German doctor and 1 East German orthodontist in the medical department.

The massive Cuban presence has caused some dissatisfaction among officials of the ministry. Some 25 percent of them complain vocally, in the presence of colleagues, in disparaging terms about what they refer to as the "Cubanization of the Ministry." They believe the Cubans are trying to impose on Nicaragua a system that is not applicable to the current Nicaraguan reality. The remaining 75 percent of the Nicaraguan officials vary from neutral to enthusiastic about the Cuban presence.

In September 1984, two push-pull airplanes and a rocket-armed helicopter raided a Nicaraguan army base at Santa Clara, Nueva Segovia Province, near the Hon-

durán border. Captain Alberto Valdez Argudin, the Cuban adviser to Baldizon's office, told office head Captain Charlotte Baltodano Egner and other office personnel that three Cubans who were operating an electronic intelligence collection facility there had been killed during the attack.

Sub-Comandante Mayorga, chief of the Directorate of State Security for the first region, later told Baldizon that three Cuban communications intelligence advisers and a Libyan army officer had been killed during the attack on the Santa Clara base.

In November 1984, the office was told that another Cuban electronic intelligence expert had been killed in the Costa Rican border area by Nicaraguan counter-revolutionary forces.

Training of Costa Rican Guerrilla Group

In March 1983, a group of approximately 45 members of the Costa Rican Popular Vanguard Party (PVP) were training for guerrilla warfare on the property of the African Oil Palm Cultivation Project near El Castillo in southern Nicaragua. Six of the Costa Ricans were lodged in the guest house of the project which they used as a headquarters for their operation. The chief of the Costa Ricans, "Ramiro," was always accompanied by a First Lieutenant of the Nicaraguan Army. A Costa Rican physician was also at the headquarters where she operated a small dispensary. The rest of the Costa Ricans were located about 12 kilometers away on a hill called El Bambu on the San Juan River, in the Costa Rican border area. Their activities were controlled from the headquarters by two-way radio communications.

The Costa Ricans, who explained their presence in El Castillo by claiming to be members of a military reserve battalion comprised of African Palm Project workers, were there for six months. They were then to return to Costa Rica and be replaced by another group for another six months. Some of the troops carried FAL rifles with telescopic sights and were being trained as snipers to kill the San Juan River boatmen who transport and supply the Nicaraguan anti-Sandinista insurgents. The Sandinistas were conducting this training because they reasoned that there are only a limited number of boatmen who know the river well and they would be hard for anti-Sandinistas to replace. (For more information about Sandinista training of foreign guerrillas, see State Department publication *Revolution Beyond Our Borders*, September 1985.)



FSLN Use of the *Turbas Divinas*, or "Divine Mobs"

In 1981, Department F-8 (Mass Organizations) of the Nicaraguan State Security (DGSE) began to organize, prepare, and use groups of collaborators to break up or neutralize anti-government demonstrations, including strikes, and to demonstrate in favor of the Sandinista government when appropriate. These groups consist in large measure of toughs and/or persons with criminal records because they are considered to be ideal material for use as civilian shock troops. The groups, referred to as "divine mobs" (*turbas divinas*), are organized in the districts of all major Nicaraguan cities and are trained and directed in mob tactics and political indoctrination by those DGSE officers who also run the local Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS). These mobs constitute a DGSE instrument for violating the rights of Nicaraguan citizens without the overt use of uniformed government security or military personnel, while giving the appearance of spontaneous actions by the masses. Their use is effective in that many opponents of the regime fear being lynched by the divine mobs. Any time the government believes a hostile demonstration is imminent, the DGSE alerts and prepares the mobs.

The first use of these mobs was in mid-1981 when they were employed to neutralize an anti-government demonstration organized by the opposition leader Alfonso Robelo in Nandaime. On that occasion divine mob action consisted of blocking access roads to the city; stoning vehicles carrying demonstrators; beating up demonstrators; painting slogans; and strewing sharpened, tire-puncturing metal devices on roadways to halt vehicular traffic.

In September 1984, shortly before national elections in Nicaragua, an anti-government demonstration was being planned at a political meeting in the offices of the Social Democratic Party in front of the Aguerrri Theater. An officer of Department F-8 requested of Captain Charlotte Baltodano Egner, chief of Baldizon's office of investigation, the use of an office to be used as a command post for the divine mobs which, he said, were being activated to stop a mass demonstration of the Democratic Coordinating Board. Baltodano furnished a small office in the People's Office for Complaints of the Ministry of the Interior, only two blocks from the offices of the Social Democratic Party. The mobs were to be directed from this office. A small white bus was sent to the office and more than 100 small flags of the Vatican and the Social Democratic Party were unloaded.



A *turba* attacks a student in the streets of Managua. The tall youth at the far right is Cristobal Hernandez Castellon, chief of one of the mass organizations within Nicaraguan State Security. His militia boots give him away as someone associated with the government.

The staffs of these flags were about a yard long and consisted of half inch diameter steel reinforcing bars used in concrete construction. The bars were wrapped in paper to conceal their metallic nature. About 90 men dressed in civilian clothes were stationed in the office's parking lot awaiting instructions to go into action with the flags. Their plan was to infiltrate the Social Democrats' demonstration under cover of Vatican and Social Democratic Party flags and then physically assault the real demonstrators, thus disrupting the demonstration. On this occasion, however, the mobs were not used because the government was successful in pressuring the Social Democrats to abandon their plans for a demonstration.

During the first half of 1985, demonstrations against compulsory military service took place in numerous Nicaraguan cities including Concepcion in the Department of Masaya, San Rafael del Sur in Managua, and Nagarote in the Department of Leon. The aroused citizenry erected barricades in the streets and demonstrated against compulsory military service, but the divine mobs were set upon them and broke up the demonstrations by stoning and beating the demonstrators with clubs, threatening them with death, and vandalizing homes or burning vehicles of the participants.

Intimidation of the Church

Early in 1982, the sacristan of a small church in a rural area in central Nicaragua became a national figure when he recounted to the news media that the Virgin Mary had appeared to him and told him that peace and brotherhood were needed among Nicaraguans. People from all over the country began to visit the church. This annoyed the leaders of the FSLN, who considered the pilgrimages to be a counter-revolutionary movement prejudicial to the FSLN's Marxist policies. Further, they feared the incident would help unify the Church, which they were trying to split. They decided to take action to destroy the sacristan's popularity.

Toward the end of October 1982, Walter Ferretti Fonseca, chief of the General Directorate of the Sandinista Police (DGSP), told several of his officers, including Lieutenant Reinerio Ordonez Padilla and Felix Rios, that they were to assist in an operation. The DGSP officers met with two officers of Department F-4 (Ideological Orientation) of State Security (DGSE) and were told that they were to act as though they were a regular police mobile patrol and go that night at 9 p.m. to a designated hotel suite in the hotel Las Mercedes where they would find the door ajar, a table with various bottles of liquor, some marijuana, and two men engaged in a homosexual act at the foot of a statue of the Virgin with several candles lit. The police officers followed their instructions and found the situation exactly as described. They arrested the two men, one of whom appeared to be in a semi-intoxicated state, and took them to a police station where they were met by the two DGSE officers. One of the officers told the police that the intoxicated person was the sacristan, whom they had first drugged and then taken to the hotel where he had been raped by the other man before the lenses of the DGSE's video cameras. The DGSE told the sacristan that they would disclose the affair and expose him to public ridicule if he did not stop making his anti-government public talks. The sacristan withdrew and the affair was never publicized. The faithful still stream to the area, however, and a new church is being built.

In the spring of 1982, Interior Minister Borge, Vice Minister Carrion, and DGSE Chief Lenin Cerna formulated a plan to discredit Father Bismarck Carballo, the spokesman for the *Curia* and the director of the Church station, *Radio Catolica*, by implicating the priest in a sex scandal. Various MINT sections, including F-1 (Operations) headed by Captain Oscar Loza; F-4 (Ideological Orientation) headed by Captain Sam Ki; and F-8 (Mass Organizations) headed by Lieutenant Aguilar; all became involved in the elaborate plot.

The plan was activated when Maritza Castillo Mendieta, an agent in F-4, contacted Carballo and requested spiritual guidance. She told Carballo that she was undergoing a severe emotional crisis because her husband had left her and her two children, and she claimed that she had attempted suicide. Later in August, after a series of spiritual visits by Carballo, she phoned him, saying that she was despondent and urging him to come to her home to provide counseling. (The home had been confiscated earlier by the government and given to Castillo.)

Shortly after Carballo arrived at Castillo's home, a DGSE agent burst in, striking Carballo on the head and forcing him at gunpoint to disrobe. The DGSE agent then fired shots, signaling other DGSE agents outside dressed as Sandinista Police that the trap had been sprung. (Lenin Cerna had insisted that only DGSE agents be involved in the actual arrest but that they should be disguised as regular policemen in order to conceal the DGSE's connection with the operation.) The "policemen" rushed into the house and took Carballo prisoner. Meanwhile, a "turba" (Sandinista mob) supplied by F-8, a Sandinista television crew, and reporters from the Sandinista press who were waiting nearby converged upon the house. The "policemen" then paraded the nude Carballo from the house through the jeering crowds and cameramen to their police car and took him to jail. The Sandinista television stations and newspapers subsequently brandished photographs of the naked priest, alleging that he was involved in an illicit sexual affair.

After the operation Castillo protested vigorously when the government wanted to take over her home for use as an official protocol house. Borge satisfied her by giving her a luxury apartment in Managua where she still resides.

COMMENT: Nicaraguan officials and knowledgeable Nicaraguans from all walks of life are aware of some incidents of repression and abuses committed by Sandinista authorities. Foreigners visiting Nicaragua for a few days, especially if they are part of the "organized tour" groups, are presented a totally false picture of the nature of the Sandinista regime. "Shows" are organized for their benefit, with State security agents posing as witnesses. Many visitors are deceived by the Sandinistas' charades.

U.S. Government files contain numerous reports of abuses and incidents such as those described by Alvaro Baldizon. But his position within the Interior Ministry gave him access to extremely sensitive information and details that most other accounts lack. This paper is not an attempt to present an exhaustive account of all of the information Alvaro Baldizon has provided. Mr. Baldizon has more details on the incidents he has described in this paper. This paper has been, rather, an attempt to show the scope and magnitude of the Sandinistas' violations of

human rights and their attempts to hide their involvement as reported by Mr. Baldizon. Baldizon believes these incidents had to become known so that the world would know the true nature of the Sandinista regime. When he fled Nicaragua he took with him his identification documents, which prove that he is who he says he is and had the job he described, and also a damaging, lengthy Interior Ministry investigation file which describes, in the words of Nicaraguan officials who participated, some of the human rights abuses he recounted. He has presented irrefutable proof of a systematic disregard for human rights on the part of the Sandinista regime.

Appendices

Following are some of the documents Mr. Baldizon brought out of Nicaragua. Appendix A consists of copies of his personal identification as an Interior Ministry officer and as a member of the FSLN. Appendix B is a copy (and a translation) of a letter signed by Interior Minister Tomas Borge, asking that all Nicaraguan civilian and military authorities cooperate fully with any request made by Mr. Baldizon.

Appendix C consists of copies (and translations) of a small portion of an internal report prepared by the Special Investigations Commission concerning reported human rights abuses that occurred on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast. The report was the only one Baldizon was able to take with him when he left the country. This report, while neither the final word nor the only evidence, helps substantiate claims that the Sandinista regime has been involved in a concerted campaign of human rights abuses. The investigation dealt with only a portion of the reported human rights cases in the area. The documents included in these appendices include a secret preliminary report on a series of assassinations which occurred in the Atlantic coast village of Leimus in 1981, a confession by a Nicaraguan Army Second Lieutenant in which he admitted that he participated in the executions in Leimus, a secret report from two investigators about the terrorizing of an Indian village in 1984 in which the women were raped while the men were held prisoner in the local church, and the secret final report by the investigator which admits to the application of "special measures" to (i.e. assassinations of) opponents of the Sandinista regime on the Atlantic coast with the knowledge of high ranking members of the Nicaraguan Government. Baldizon states that despite its shocking contents this "final report" was, in effect, an internal whitewash which toned down what actually happened and in some cases reported people as being released by GON authorities when in fact they were never seen or heard from again.